

Five Times Faster: Rethinking the Science, Economics, and Diplomacy of Climate Change

Simon Sharpe

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In his excellent and informative book *Five Times Faster*, Simon Sharpe proposes solutions to climate change challenges on three fronts: science, economics, and policy.

Sharpe argues that the biggest problem with current approaches to dealing with the climate crisis is their pace. While the world is making some progress in replacing fossil fuels, the process needs to speed up. And on the science front, scientists have too often erred on the side of caution, publishing studies that prioritize certainty over the worst-case catastrophic predictions that could spur governments to faster action. As Sharpe explains, “When the scientists chose to leave the information about the world getting too hot for humans out of the Summary for Policymakers because it was the finding of only one research study, they made a clear choice to prioritise confidence over policy.”

Five Times Faster makes similar cases on other fronts too. Sharpe shares personal experiences from his time working for the United Kingdom’s government, as when he was told there was no need to educate another country’s diplomats because they “accept the science of climate change,” even when they underestimated the effects. Issues of not enough research, not enough risk assessment, and a tendency to baseline the most likely outcomes rather than the most destructive ones come up in all three focus areas, and Sharpe emphasizes the scope of underestimation. In all cases, he provides examples of how to make changes to decarbonize the world at a pace more commensurate with the real risks, and to maximize action rather than do the bare minimum and hope it’s enough.

Five Times Faster is an important book that focuses on the too often overlooked problem of pace and the need to turn procrastination into bold action.

JEFF FLEISCHER (May / June 2023)

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